



A STUDY OF THE STATUS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN UTTAR PRADESH AFTER INDEPENDENCE

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ABSTRACT

The slogan 'Angrezi Hatao' resounded in many parts of North India after independence. In Uttar Pradesh this movement caught the imagination of many political leaders and the masses especially because Dr Ram Manohar Lohia, the main ideologue behind it was a son of the soil. English was perceived as a colonial legacy and a sign of cultural subjugation. When the followers of Lohia came to power, they tried to abolish English medium schools in the state and restrict learning of English to the minimum in the school curriculum. Though the attempt did not succeed, the general view was that English was a hurdle for the rural masses in the public exams and the English medium schools were catering to elite groups and thus creating two classes of citizens. Having two languages as media of instruction was considered a Dual System of Education basically against the right to equality enshrined in the constitution. The controversy continued to rage till the end of the last century. But as globalization and modernization began to spread their wings, the public in general began to clamor for English education which is perceived as the key to salvation (TOI, 2012). The intellectuals, Dalits and minorities felt that English education alone can empower and emancipate people. Slowly the realization dawned upon the political class and since 1997 the state government adopted a positive approach towards the issue. Thus many ideological revolutions were responsible for the policy shift of the state government from 'angrezi hatao' to 'angrezi sikhao'(Sheorey, 2006)

KEYWORDS: Angrezi Hatao, Angrezi Sikha, legacy, emancipation, policy.

Introduction

The hegemony of English in the global scenario in the economic, political, literary, scientific, technological, academic and social spheres of life remains still unchallenged. The two reasons for the spread of English were the emergence of Britain as an Imperial Power in the 19th and 20th centuries and the emergence of America as an economic power in the 1990s. Today the power of English is something to be reckoned with by every nation in the world. Same is the case with India which was an erstwhile British colony. In spite of much resentment to the use of the language in our country the people have consistently clamored for English education right from the 18th century and the demand is still on.

The British authorities in India thought that only English could be the most powerful medium for imparting fresh ideas and therefore it was promoted. Being the language of the ruling class, it was the key to offices of trust and higher emoluments. By and large English came to occupy a place of paramount importance in the educational system in India including Uttar Pradesh.

After independence, the need and importance of acquiring knowledge of English in one's school life was emphasized upon by the various education commissions, though the stage at which it has to be introduced in the school curriculum has been a bone of contention in many parts of India, especially in Uttar Pradesh.

As far as the policies of the U.P. government with regard to the teaching of English and allowing English medium schools are concerned one finds that they have undergone substantial changes in the post-independence era and it was felt that the circumstances for and rationale behind such changes merit an in-depth analysis. It is also true that modernization has changed the outlook of our policy makers. State government policies with regard to the need, level of introduction and extend of teaching of English and allowing of English medium education have undergone substantial changes after independence. Therefore a need was felt for a close study of the past and present state policies of U.P. in this regard to understand the present scenario better and make future strategies for creating a knowledge based society.

Objectives :

The objectives of the study are:

- To study the policies adopted by the government of Uttar Pradesh with regard to the teaching of English in the Post-Independence period.
- To find out the existing status of English language teaching in the school education system in U.P. and the latest state policy in this regard.
- To examine the circumstances which have led to the change in policy with regard to the teaching of English and allowing English medium education in the state from time to time.
- To examine the efforts made and measures taken to promote English language teaching by the state government and its various agencies.

Methodology

This study is qualitative. It is analytical and interpretative in nature. The methodology adopted was Document Analysis of related Government, non-government documents as well as the content analysis of the sociological and educational views of various thinkers. The educational practices in the state at the school level especially regarding the teaching of English and using it as a medium of instruction have been critically examined.

The primary documents studied include reports by various educational committees and commissions, U.P. government orders, official records of the U.P. Education Department, acts of the state government, laws of the U.P. Board, policy declarations by the Central and state government, annual reviews/reports on the Progress of Education published by the State Department of Education (Both Madhyamik and Basic), SCERT and NCERT.

The secondary documents examined include biography of Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia, books on his Life and articles on his sociological and political views. Write-ups on the views of modern thinkers and activists like Amartya Sen, Chandra Bhan Prasad and Kancha Ilaiah on the topic under investigation were also studied. The Rainbow series of English textbooks of Basic Shiksha Parishad up to class VIII and those prescribed for High school and Intermediate classes were also analyzed.

Articles, news items and editorials appearing in various leading newspapers related to the topic have been extensively reviewed. They include The Times of India (Lucknow Edition) The Dainik Jagran, the Amar Ujala, and the Telegraph. Materials related to the study from various websites have been searched and they include the official web sites of Central Agencies, State agencies, Education Departments as well as general websites.

After exploring these documents and studying them, relevant information was collected. The available data was analyzed to gain insight into the policy of the government of Uttar Pradesh with regard to the teaching of English in the schools of the state.

Findings

The findings of the study are as follows:

Regarding the first objective, it was found that just after independence, in 1948, the distinction between Hindustani and Anglo Hindustani patterns up to class VIII was put to an end and English was abolished up to class V. A New Curriculum based on Acharya Narendra Deo Committee report was introduced with mother tongue as medium up to class VIII. English became optional from V to VIII. It was compulsory for Literary & Scientific groups for IX to XII. In 1954, New Secondary Curriculum on Recommendations of 2nd Narendra Deo Committee was introduced. At High school and Intermediate levels students had a compulsory second language out of MIL or MFL which included English. Seminar on Secondary Education in 1959 insisted on the importance of English and said that it should continue as an optional subject in Junior and Secondary schools. In 1961 English was introduced in class III in 9000 selected schools as an optional subject. In 1990 when the followers of Lohia came to power, SCERT

prepared a proposal to end Dual System of Education and recommended that Hindi alone should be medium of instruction, English should be optional only from class VI, no more English medium schools should be allowed and existing ones must be affiliated to U P Board and made Hindi medium. But there was no concrete action on these proposals and English medium schools continued to function and after 1995 there was a substantial increase in their number.

Coming to the second objective, it was found that in 1997 English was introduced in Govt. run schools from class III and in 2007 it was introduced from class II. In 2008 it was introduced from class I and after the brainstorming by SCERT New Syllabus Document was prepared which laid great stress on importance of English. New set of textbooks were produced and clear objectives were set for teaching of English. As of now, students receive exposure to basics of English in classes I & II. Formal introduction of subject with reading, writing, speaking is from class III. Permission has also been given to start English medium schools affiliated to U P Board without insisting on having a Hindi medium section (Amar Ujala, 2013).

Findings regarding the third objective show that one reason for the anti-English feeling is that it was the language of our oppressors - the colonial rulers who exploited us. Another influential movement which had far reaching consequences on the policies of the Government is the Anti-English Movement spearheaded by the Socialist ideologue Shri Ram Manohar Lohia. He founded the 'Angrezi Hatao' Movement in 1958 and firmly believed that English was the language of feudalism and exploitation of the masses. The Samajwadi political outfit which considers Dr. Lohia as its idol opposed the teaching of English as a compulsory subject and wanted to stop English as a medium of instruction in schools in the state (SCERT, 1990). Its anti-English policy was clearly expressed through its manifestos. But with modernization and globalization, the old mindset of Samajwadi leaders changed. They found that anti – English policy was highly unpopular among the intellectuals (Amartya Sen, 2009) as well as the masses. At the same time activists like Chandra Bahn Prasad even built a temple for goddess English in Lakhimpurkheri (TOI, 2010), (The Telegraph, 2010) and demanded spread of English education among the Dalits. The state government also had to keep pace with the developments across the country in the light of the National Curriculum Framework 2005, and the National Knowledge Commission- 2006. Therefore the state witnessed on one hand an extreme resistance to the spread of English language teaching earlier whereas on the other hand it today experiences an unprecedented demand for English medium education and the desire for acquiring communication skills in English.

Data collected on the fourth objective revealed that the Government of Uttar Pradesh through its Department of Education and various other associated agencies has undertaken many steps to promote the teaching of English in the state after the attainment of independence. In the 200657 Primary and Upper primary schools with 373.12 lakh students under the Basic Shiksha Parishad, English is taught in all classes from class I to VIII. Right from the beginning English has remained an optional second language at the High School and Intermediate levels and majority of students choose English both at high school and intermediate levels for the Board exams.

The most important institution which has made substantial contribution in the field of teaching and learning of English in the state of Uttar Pradesh has been the English Language Teaching Institute, at Allenganj, Allahabad. By training teachers of English, the officials of the Department of Education and the teacher educators of DIET and by producing materials for teaching English, the institute has helped in improving the standard of teaching of English in the state.

The SCERT has been instrumental in developing and updating syllabus of English for all classes. State Institute of Educational Technology, Lucknow, develops Educational Television Programmes at the regional level. State Open School Board registers students for classes 10 and 12 exams and English is an optional subject. Institute of Correspondence Education, Allahabad which provides educational assistance to the students appearing as private candidates in the UP Board exams offers English as an optional subject at high school and for humanity students of Intermediate. State Institute of Education develops training programmes for teachers and teacher trainers in English along with other subjects. State Institute of Educational Management and Training (SIEMAT), organizes research studies in various topics related to challenges in English language teaching.

Discussion and Educational Implications

Soon after independence the government introduced a syllabus on the recommendations of Acharya Narendra Dev Committee. English was abolished from all primary schools and it became an optional subject from class VI up to XII. It remained the medium of instruction only in the Anglo Indian schools. The government was unwilling to affiliate English medium schools except in rare cases provided they were ready to have at least one Hindi medium section. The intention of the followers of Lohia in 1990 to do away with English medium schools and restrict the introduction of English as an optional subject only from class VI did not succeed as the popular opinion was against it.

As the importance of English kept on increasing, the BSP government took some proactive steps in 1997, 2007 and 2008. It also decided to give unconditional

affiliation to English medium schools and even allowed English medium classes in existing Hindi medium schools (Amar Ujala, 2013).

U.P was a prominent state where opposition to English was very evident after independence, due to the Angrezi Hatao movement of Dr. Lohia, a son of the soil. The Samajwadi party following his ideology opposed English. But finally as grass root realities changed and the intellectuals (Amartya Sen, 2009) and common man (TOI, 2012) started demanding English language teaching and English medium education the party changed its anti-English stand (TOI, 2012). The Dalits (Illaiah, 2013) and even Muslims (Iqbal, 2013) began to clamor for English education.

The controversy of English medium education is still raging. But making English as medium of instruction for all is not viable. The medium should be the mother tongue of the child. This is based on sound psychological principles and in U.P a large rural population depends on the state run schools.

However another question is whether English medium schools should be allowed to flourish in the state. The demand for them is on the increase even in rural pockets of the state and every one who can afford a little money wishes to give English medium education to their children. Therefore the issue of getting English medium education is best left to the discretion of parents. It must be remembered that the UN recognizes the fundamental right of parents to decide what kind of education their children must be exposed to (Ramaswamy, 2001).

After the government took the revolutionary step of introducing English at the primary level, many have expressed their apprehensions about how far the system is able to deliver, given the standard of English of the teachers themselves. The standard of teaching of English leaves much to be desired. It has been a perennial problem pointed out by inspectors of schools in the British period (Reports of 1911-12, 1923-24, 1935-36) who said that English was the worst taught subject. The Inspectors found that the boys could not express their ideas in English; they failed to use correct language and write original composition in it. For e.g. Mr. Richardson (1911) Inspector of schools of Lucknow division said in his report that the main problems included faulty pronunciation and incorrect idiom. The teachers themselves were not able to correct them because their own pronunciation was not up to the mark. Even after independence the situation remained the same. In 1950-51 the Report on the Progress of Education also stated that standards of English have gone down due to the shifting of emphasis on Hindi which has been declared the language of the state. Good hand writing, correct pronunciation and expression have become rare. The deterioration is due to the lack of methodical teaching and careful correction of written exercises of the scholars by the teachers. Recent studies also reveal much the same picture. Therefore teachers at all levels need to be trained immediately in the techniques of teaching English. The English Language Teaching Institute, Allahabad should take the lead.

The curriculum of English approved till class VIII is as per the guidelines of NCF 2005 and NCERT. But at the secondary and higher secondary stages the syllabus is based on the old pattern which promotes rote memorization. For example the syllabus for Class XII Board Exam includes 14 lessons of prose, 8 short stories, 20 poems, a play by Shakespeare and a narrative poem of 590 lines. The questions asked are often stereotyped and encourage cramming. Therefore study of literature should be made more interesting; lessons should be more intelligible and connected to the life of the learner. The exam pattern should be based on understanding.

The traditional grammar- translation method is still followed in the state especially at the secondary and higher secondary stages. There is a lot of insistence on translation from Hindi to English and vice versa. Today most boards have discarded this method and lay greater stress on communicative approach to language learning. So items on English language learning should include things related to everyday life requirements like writing messages, notices, postcards, reviews, designing posters, drafting invitations and advertisements, preparing reports etc. Structural approach to the learning of English language as promoted by English Language Teaching Institute, Allahabad should be adopted by the Board. Reading comprehension, an essential part of most competitive exams today, should form an integral part of the syllabus. Dialogue completion, editing, data interpretations etc. which come handy in life must also be part of the syllabus. Such skill based syllabus should be introduced in the U.P. Board as well.

Another complaint is that the students of the state board are unable to communicate well in English. The newly introduced syllabus at the primary and upper primary levels lays great stress on improving oral skills among the students. There is a need to follow this guideline strictly and teachers should give genuine demonstrations on pronunciation and English speaking with sufficient scope for exercising the same.

The examination system lays great stress on the writing skills. The oral skills are rarely tested. This aspect should be given attention. In the pre independence days there was stress on oral and listening skills. There were both written and oral examinations in English. The Report on Education of 1911-12 says that the oral test included reading, dictation and conversation. In 1923-24 this practice was discontinued for practical reasons. But from the academic session 2011-12, as part of CCE, ten marks have been assigned for testing the oral skills. It is an inter-

nal assessment and the marks awarded in class X is added to the public examination marks. This is a welcome development and should be continued in all classes.

Periods allotted for teaching of English in the primary schools is just 3, in the upper primary 5 and in the secondary and higher secondary levels it is 6. Mere three periods allotted at the primary level is inadequate to achieve the objectives set and it is the lowest in India in comparison to other states. Therefore more number of periods must be assigned for the subject per week especially at the primary level.

The government often fails to provide the basic facilities or infrastructure for effective teaching-learning. But the innovative and proactive teacher can make use of easily available materials from the locality for effective language teaching. Methods like use of greeting cards for task based learning, use of songs for productive language learning; use of 'Best from Waste' principle for class room activity etc. can be very effective and absorbing for students. Activities like organized class assemblies, story narration, dramatization of prescribed lessons, project based methods like visit to the local market can make English language teaching lively and productive.

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